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REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this patent application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 1,893,841 to Merritt or U.S. Patent No. 6,264,251 to Kunsman et al.

However, the Examiner's rejection is respectfully traversed as follows.

The Applicant has amended claims 1 and 9 to overcome the above rejections.

According to Merritt, the Examiner asserts that the connecting portions include a connection hole and a projection in the form of a bolt 10 to connect the portions together. However, the bolt is a separate part from the flange member such that it is required to assemble the bolt and flange member when two

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flange members are initially put around the pipe, which is not an easy job.

The split flange recited in amended claims 1 or 9 comprises two connecting portions formed integral with the flange members and projecting radially out from the outer periphery, wherein one of the respective mating respective connecting portions has a projection and the other connecting portion has a connecting hole. Merritt, does not teach this feature. Merritt teaches system which has holes for the bolts 10, that do not appear to project from the outer periphery of the assembled flange. The holes of Merritt require additional bolts 10 which are not formed integral with the flange members to work as connecting portions. Therefore, with the design of the present invention, it is easier to initially put the flange members around the pipe with the claimed split flange. This is because as stated in the specification on page 6 lines 7-13, the connecting members do not constitute separate parts from the flange members, therefore, the number of parts can be reduced, and the operations for fitting the split flange firmly around the pipe may be carried out in a labor saving manner.

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According to *Kunsman et al.*, the Examiner asserts that a split flange having a pair of arcuate flange segments 50, 52 of the same shape which form a flange shape having an outer periphery when assembled and two connecting portions include a connection hole 54 and a projection 56.

However, the two connecting portions of *Kunsman et al.* do not project radially out from the outer periphery. Therefore, it is not easy to initially put the two flange segments 50, 52 of *Kunsman et al.* around the pipe because the opening space made by the connected flange segments 50, 52 is not as large as in the case of the connected flange members according to the amended claim 1 or claim 9 since the flange members are connected at positions projecting from the outer periphery. The position of these connection elements leading to the ease of movement and eventual connection of these elements is important because it creates a system that can be used in a labor saving manner.

Since the flange segments 50, 52 of *Kunsman et al.* are preferably provided with radially extending ears that are engageable by pincers (col. 9, lines 16-22), it is not suggested to move the bolt holes 30, 32 to an outer periphery. Therefore,

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it would not have been obvious to the one of skilled in the art to combine the reference of *Kunsman et al.* with *Merritt*.

Claims 2, 3, 10 and 11 are cancelled without prejudice.

Since claims 4-8 are eventually dependent from claim 1, which is in a condition for grant as mentioned above, claims 4-8 should be allowable.

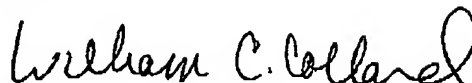
In summary, claim(s) 1, 5, and 9 have been amended, claims 2, 3, 10 and 11 have been canceled without prejudice. In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that the claims be allowed and that this case be passed to issue.

Applicant respectfully request that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Enclosure(s):

CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

Fax No. 703-872-9306

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being sent by facsimile transmission to the U.S.P.T.O. to Patent Examiner E. Nicholson at Group No.3679, to 1-703-872-9306 on January 24, 2005.


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